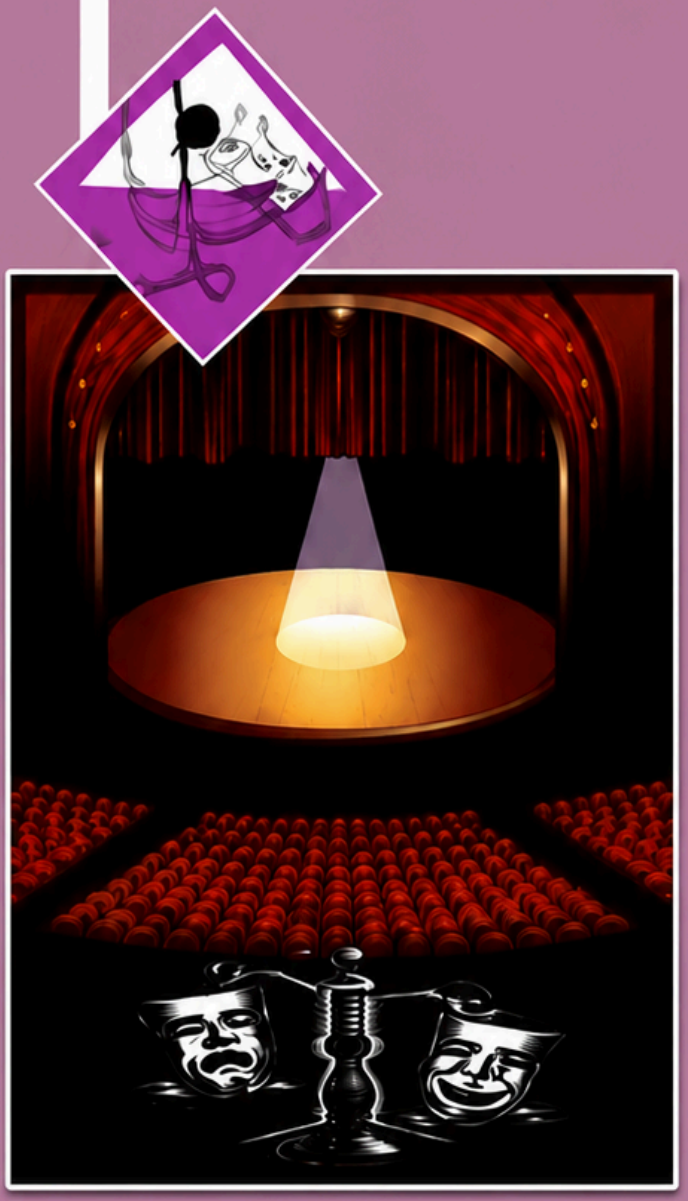

What is Drama

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Original Publication Year: 2022

Introduction

The observer of ancient and modern history, here and there, in every corner of the globe, arrives at a fundamental truth: that mankind has known the art of theatre in all eras—in the Far East with its ancient civilizations, in North, Central, and South Africa, in Europe, and even in the Americas before and after their federal union.

This is because the art of theatre is fundamentally linked to a particular concept of imitation—a fact clearly evident in the childhood of any human being, where one attempts to imitate those around them in a manner that often appears comical.

Thus, theatre was never the monopoly of any one people; rather, every people has its own theatre that serves to entertain and educate, from the ancient tribes who gathered around a performer enacting a hunt or self-defense through various expressive dances. Here, the performer imitates a human action with the aim of teaching the audience from their own kin how to hunt or defend themselves, while simultaneously providing them with enjoyment.

The observer of the forms of drama throughout the world—across its history and geography—is confirmed in the truth that there is no single correct formula for drama and another incorrect one, just as there is no single correct form of theatre to the exclusion of all others. The formulas and forms, in both the arts of drama and theatre, have diversified across epochs and over the entire geographical spectrum, affirming the truth that drama and theatre were created to play an important role in the education, entertainment, and instruction of peoples—by whatever means accord with the nature of each people, regardless of their culture, affiliations, or life experiences.

At the outset of this book, we affirm this truth: that there are other formulas of drama known to humanity in the East, West, North, and South, and that there are other dramatic forms besides those we present in this book.

However, the subject of the book and the size of the publication necessitate a focus on a specific type of dramatic writing within a single geographical area—primarily Western drama.

We emphasize that the space available for this publication would not permit tracing drama in the Far East, Africa, or the rest of Asia; rather, the available space has compelled us to select a specific geographical starting point to explore what drama is, especially since Western drama is—without any doubt—the dominant and prevailing formula among the dramas of all human races spread across the world today.

This book presents a comprehensive view of drama in the West, traversing all its types and formulas known to us throughout history, from the fifth century BC to the present day, defining its essence, types, techniques, and function, in order to reveal the general meaning of the term "drama" in a manner that seeks to increase cultural awareness of this significant human achievement, which has played an effective role in exposing the anxieties of humanity in every time and place, and the secrets of its fears and hopes across the ages.

It is a beneficial journey to learn about Western drama, from the emergence of the first actor on the first theatrical stage in the West to the astonishing development reached by modern media for drama today. During this journey, the book presents Western drama in all its productive eras, uncovering the genres that prevailed in each era and the general characteristics of each genre, in addition to arriving at the essence of drama in each era and the function it performs.

This book contains an exploration of the world of Western drama during each of its stages through four elements:

- The essence of drama,
- The forms of drama,
- The technique of each dramatic form,
- The function that drama performs.

This is with the aim of understanding the essence of drama in general, its techniques, and its function, alongside the dramatic genres known to Western history, beginning with tragedy and ending with the serious play, in addition to the advanced media that appeared and the resulting emergence of cinematic, radio, and television drama.

In conclusion, I can only extend my full gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Haitham Al-Haj for his wise administration of the largest cultural institution in the Arab world, and my thanks also go to Dr. Mohieldin Abdel-Hay for his supervision of this series, which is unique to the Egyptian General Book Organization, affirming its enlightening role unmatched by any other cultural institution.

Pre-Drama

Western drama was born in the land of the Greeks from the womb of religious celebrations known as dithyrambic hymns and dances. The *dithyrambos* is a religious lyrical and danced poetic piece performed by fifty men wearing goatskins around the altar of the god Dionysus, the god of the vine. The subject of the dithyramb dealt with a cycle from the life of the god Dionysus, sung by the fifty men as they danced in a circle. The dithyramb developed when one of the group of chanting dancers separated himself, stood in their midst, and created a distance between himself and them; he would sing his hymn while the chanting dancers of the dithyramb repeated their hymns, occasionally responding to him in a dialogical manner. The audience would surround the circle, watching this sung and danced ceremony that dealt with the life of their beloved god.

Matters developed further when Thespis (born in the early sixth century BC) appeared—rightfully considered the legitimate innovator of ancient Western theatre. He was the first to engage in performative acting before spectators and established a dramatic dialogue with the leader of the group of dithyrambic singers and dancers on one side, and the singers on the other. He developed his performance and created the first theatrical stage in Western theatre by constructing a wooden cart with two levels: the lower level was enclosed on all four sides, while the upper level—which allowed the viewing audience to see the performer Thespis clearly throughout the performance—was merely a platform without surrounding walls to facilitate the audience's view of what occurred upon it. A ladder connected the two levels of the cart, aiding Thespis in moving easily between them to change his costume and makeup while the group of dithyrambic singing dancers performed their hymns and dances.

Thespis would perform a monologue for each character he portrayed during the dithyrambic performance. Once he finished, the singers would commence their hymns about the character Thespis had enacted. While they sang their hymn and danced before the audience of spectators, Thespis would immediately descend to the lower level of the cart, change his costume and makeup, and ascend to perform the next character, for which the group of singing dancers would pave the way in their hymns.

This technique represented a significant qualitative leap from the performance of the dithyrambic singers and dancers to the placement of the first actor on the first theatrical stage in the Western world.

This was a fully theatrical situation, yet it did not rely on a written drama; rather, it depended upon memorized hymns and designed dances to express the general state upon which the celebration was based, along with that dialogue between Thespis, the leader of the chorus, and the chorus. It was a state where elements of auditory and visual enjoyment were present—through what the theatrical performance contained of word/poetry/hymns, music, singing, dancing, and the performance of an actor. These were complete theatrical elements, yet they did not depend on a written dramatic text; instead, they relied on numerous rehearsals that assembled the scattered fragments of these elements into a magnificent artistic whole.

Greek and Roman Drama

The word *drama* in Greek derives from the word *Dran*, which means “to do” or “to perform an action,” and from it was derived the word *drama*, which means “an action performed.” For this reason, we are not surprised when Aristotle defines tragedy as “an imitation of an action,” for action in drama is its foundation and its soul. A dramatic work is distinguished from a non-dramatic one in that it embodies an action, rather than describing or narrating it.

After Thespis came those who attempted to imitate him, and the situation transitioned from the theatrical to the dramatic at the hands of Aeschylus (535 BC – 456 BC), who is rightfully considered the legitimate father of Greek tragedy. He first participated in the tragic

competitions at the age of twenty-five, but did not win first prize until fifteen years later, at the age of forty.

Between 500 BC and 458 BC, Aeschylus won first prize thirteen times, and his fame spread among the tragic poets of his age.

Aeschylus wrote more than seventy plays, of which only seven tragedies have reached us:

- *The Suppliants* (490 BC),
- *The Persians* (473 BC),
- *Seven Against Thebes* (467 BC),
- *Prometheus Bound* (465 BC),
- *The Oresteia* trilogy (458 BC), consisting of three plays:
    - *Agamemnon*,
    - *The Libation Bearers*,
    - *The Eumenides*.

Perhaps the most prominent features of Aeschylus' tragedies are the strong religious tendency and the glorification of the gods, such that the chorus in Aeschylus' plays clearly reflects this religious tendency in its hymns, and the movement of the tragic action affirms this.

It is worth noting that Aeschylus' role was important in the history of Western drama, not only because he was the founder of tragedy in its recognized form, but also because he developed the artistry of writing tragedy as a responsible man of the theatre. He added the second actor, and this did not mean there were only two characters in a single tragedy; rather, a single scene would contain only two tragic roles, with silent roles not counted in this number. This meant that a single actor—one of the two—would perform more than one character, aided by the chorus filling the time between the performance of the first role and his change of costume, makeup, and wig with hymns that commented on the events or paved the way for subsequent events or a character who would appear in the following scene.

With Aeschylus' addition of the second actor, dramatic dialogue between two characters arose for the first time on the stage, and moreover, the space occupied by the narrative-based

choral hymns diminished.

Aeschylus also developed methods of theatrical direction, costumes, and other theatrical production requirements.

In the tragic competitions, each poet would present a tragic trilogy in addition to a satyr play (*Satyrus*). This was a tragicomic type of play presented by a group of the chorus wearing goatskins and singing ribald hymns. Only one satyr play has survived: *The Cyclops*, attributed to the tragic poet Euripides.

Following the line of tragedy's development, the name Sophocles appears (c. 497 BC – 406 BC), the second-greatest poet of Greek tragedy. Over the course of sixty years, he participated in tragic theatre competitions and won first prize more than twenty times.

Sophocles wrote more than 120 tragedies and satyr plays; unfortunately, only seven plays and part of a satyr play have reached us. Sophocles' art was distinguished by its dignified language, his genius in dramatic plot construction, and his middle path between the religious and the humanistic inclinations. The plays that have come down to us from Sophocles are:

- *Ajax* (447 BC),
- *Antigone* (441 BC),
- *Oedipus the King* (430 BC),
- *Electra* (c. 418 BC),
- *The Women of Trachis* (c. 413 BC),
- *Philoctetes* (409 BC),
- *Oedipus at Colonus* (not performed until after his death).

It is worth mentioning that the tragedy Aristotle took as a model for ideal tragic writing is Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

Among the most important innovations Sophocles added to his predecessors was the addition of the third actor. This inevitably contributed to increasing the space of dramatic dialogue in the play and reduced the space of narrative delivered by the chorus—even though

he increased the number of chorus members to fifteen instead of twelve. This innovation was adopted by his contemporary tragic poets, such as Aeschylus.

Scholars also note that Sophocles invented painted scenery and introduced it into his theatrical performances.

It can be said that Sophocles preserved the grandeur of the human character, despite it containing the tragic flaw that destroys its happiness at the end of each tragedy. This becomes clearly apparent when we move on to studying tragedy with the third most important Greek tragic poet: Euripides (484 BC – 406 BC). We can describe him as the only Greek poet who focused—in most of his tragedies—on the feelings of the human woman. Some scholars describe him as the one who brought Greek tragedy down from its lofty heights to appear as a more realistic dramatic piece, in place of the tragic majesty that had characterized tragedy before him.

The characters in Euripides' tragedies are more human, emotional, and intense than their counterparts in the works of both Aeschylus and Sophocles.

Euripides wrote 92 plays, of which only 17 have reached us:

- *Cyclops – Alcestis – Medea – Hippolytus – The Children of Heracles – Andromache – Hecuba – Heracles – The Suppliants – Ion – Electra – The Trojan Women – Iphigenia in Tauris – Helen – The Phoenician Women – Orestes*
- *Iphigenia at Aulis*

Euripides is credited with the realistic character of his tragedies, to the extent that he is considered the most frequently revived of the Greek dramatic poets throughout both ancient and modern Western theatre. He continued to use three actors in addition to the chorus, inventing the prologue speech delivered by one of the play's characters or perhaps by one of the gods. He is also credited with reducing the role of the chorus in drama, which was reflected in granting more space to dialogue and acting in his plays. Moreover, he added machines to the stage, such as the *deus ex machina* (god from the machine), which carried one of the characters and rose before the audience to the top of the theatre and disappeared, as happened in his play *Medea*.

Perhaps Euripides' interest in female characters drove him to probe their depths, analyze their behavior, and reach the psychological motive responsible for the nature of their actions. He is, in truth, the first Western dramatic writer to be concerned with portraying character in a psychological manner, particularly the character of women.

And if tragedy underwent a noticeable development during the era of the three aforementioned poets (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides) as a result of raising the number of actors to three, with a single actor performing multiple roles by using costumes and the mask specific to each character, then the development that accompanied tragedy went beyond this to reducing the importance of the chorus's role and focusing on the acted episodes (episodes), alongside the invention of masks instead of the colored powder used to paint the face, in addition to Euripides' invention of the machine for lifting the actor, which he used frequently in his tragedies, such as in *Medea*, where Medea escapes with the bodies of her two sons by means of the sun chariot before the spectators, rising to the theatre's sky and then disappearing.

The structure of Greek tragedy reveals, in its precise details, a performance ultimately aimed at a specific function entrusted to tragedy: catharsis—the purgation of the recipient from the emotions of fear and pity, which are clearly manifested in the scene of suffering or *Pathos*, where we see the hero in pain, pouring out his complaint to the chorus.

The Greek genius succeeded in discovering the dramatic/tragic art through the process of imitating an action whose nature is seriousness, complete from its beginning to its end, so that the recipient might learn from it and add to their human account experiences about existence. And for the drama/tragedy to be effective and present a complete imitated action, this action must, by its dramatic nature, be embodied—that is, heard and seen before the perception of the viewing audience—and not presented through narrative/recounting.

The dramatic/embodied nature is the optimal dramatic means for influencing the audience of recipients, because of the impact of indirectness; this means that the recipient falls within the circle of dramatic influence by their own choice, as they watch people acting, and thus learn proper conduct from their behavior, reaching, through observing the dramatic action, the ultimate goal for which the dramatic/tragic work was written.

The Greek tragic poet was careful not to include in his tragic work a set of errors, out of concern that the tragedy should perform its function which we have indicated: catharsis.

And if tragedy is received through emotional, not rational, reception, it is necessary that the tragic poet not include anything that would make the recipient ask: How did it happen and why? Evidence of this is that a character does not change unless there is a logical reason necessitating their change; a blind character remains blind throughout the tragic work (such as the character of Tiresias in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*), and it is not correct for them to become a seeing character unless there is a dramatic justification for that.

The tragic poet also ensured purity of genre; he did not include humorous or comic scenes within his tragic work, but rather proceeded according to the tragic effect throughout the work to achieve his desired goal.

And if the imitated action is noble, then it must be presented by a character marked by social and moral nobility; he is either a demigod or a king. It is not proper for the tragic action to be performed by a character lower than the general level of the audience of recipients.

The language of this character, and of the other active characters in the tragedy, is an elevated language cast in dignified poetry, with its words carefully selected to convey the sublime meaning of the tragedy.

And if the imitated action is characterized by seriousness and gravity, the end of this action must be catastrophic, to affirm the desired function and to purge the recipient of the emotions of fear and pity.

It is noticeable that the genius of the Greek tragic poet drove him to place a single, serious, and dangerous action in his imitation, and he did not place more than one action or dramatic line; because concentration in performing the tragic action is required to intensify the effect on the recipient without distracting them with another subject within the dramatic plot representing the events of the tragic work.

Thus, the Greek tragic text—as described by Aristotle in his *Poetics*—includes a noble human model on both the social and moral levels: he is either a demigod or a king, in addition to the fact that his fortune does not turn from happiness to misery due to baseness within him,

but rather because of some error for which he is not responsible, as we find in the character of Oedipus, which is considered the ideal tragic model for tragic writing according to Aristotle. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus' fortune turns from happiness to misery because of *hamartia*, which means a flaw in his character makeup for which he is not responsible. Oedipus is possessed by the traits of impulsiveness and quick anger, for which he is not responsible; rather, they are part of his nature as a human being.

It is worth noting here that the tragic poet was not merely the playwright; he was also its author, director, composer of its music, performer of the principal role, and trainer of the chorus in dance and song. That is to say, the dramatic poet was a man of the theatre in the general sense of the word before the art of theatre underwent specialization in one of its branches.

Alongside tragedy, the Greek genius also knew the art of comedy, an art that also originated from the hymns concerned with the birth of the god Dionysus—joyful hymns. The development of this art is represented by two important writers: Aristophanes and Menander.

Aristotle alludes to what he heard from the Dorians, who claimed that the art of comedy originated with them, just as they had invented tragedy, and that the Megarians also claimed that they were the ones who invented comedy.

There is a prevailing opinion that the word *comedy* derives from the Greek word *Komos*, meaning a noisy, revelrous rustic procession, and the word *Ode*, meaning a song, which was sung in the Greek countryside during the harvest season each year, especially the grape harvest during the festivals of the god Dionysus.

This indicates that comedy is an art born from the womb of the popular religious celebrations of the Greek people. Aristotle points out that the comic poet Crates was the first to abandon personal satirical poetry as laugh-provoking material in favor of dramatic comic poetry.

Comedy passed through three successive phases, which can be summarized as follows: The first phase is that of **Old Comedy**, which flourished in the period from 486 BC until around 400 BC. The comedies of this phase are characterized by their general political subject matter, their happy endings, and the fact that the laughter relies on sharp, critical humor. The

most important poets of this phase include: Magnes, Cratinus, Crates, Pherecrates, Eupolis, Phrynichus, and Aristophanes (448 BC – 380 BC), the greatest poet of Greek comedy, who wrote about 40 comic texts, of which only 11 have reached us. His surviving comic works are:

- *The Acharnians* (425 BC),
- *The Knights* (424 BC),
- *The Clouds* (423 BC),
- *The Wasps* (422 BC),
- *Peace* (421 BC),
- *The Birds* (414 BC),
- *Lysistrata* (411 BC),
- *Thesmophoriazusae* (411 BC),
- *The Frogs* (405 BC),
- *Assemblywomen* (392 BC),
- *Plutus* (388 BC).

Aristophanes is the only Old Comedy poet from whom some works have reached us.

The second phase of comedy's development is the **Middle Comedy**, a phase that began around 400 BC, characterized by mockery of myths and derision of philosophical and literary works, in addition to a reduction in choral hymns compared to the previous phase. The later comic works of Aristophanes represent this phase.

The third phase remains: the **New Comedy**, which begins around 336 BC. Its works are characterized by drawing inspiration from contemporary social life; gentle humor replaced the sharp jokes that had been features of Old Comedy. Romantic love became a favored subject for the writers of this phase, alongside the disappearance of the chorus, and the acted episodes became clear and known as acts; the comic play text in this phase consists of five successive acts. This phase is represented by numerous writers, at the head of the list being the comic dramatic poet Menander (342 BC – 292 BC), from whom we have received three complete plays belonging to this phase of the development of Greek comedy:

- *The Arbitrants*,

- *The Girl with the Shorn Hair*,
- *The Girl from Samos*.

And if we have indicated earlier that the tragic work must be received through emotion, we also affirm here that the comic work must be received through reason, not emotion. The comic text here presents a character in a state of inappropriate choice. In Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, the hero, who has incurred many debts because of his son's passion for horse racing, instead of repaying his debt, goes to the school of Socrates to learn the art of argumentation so as to evade paying his debt; when he fails, he sends his son to Socrates' school to learn argumentation, but the son returns to practice argumentation on his father and subjects him to a severe beating, which enrages the father, who goes to Socrates' school and sets it on fire.

All the choices made in the play, from the father's behavior, confirm erroneous rational actions, and consequently provoke the recipient's indignation and drive them to laugh at the deviant behavior of the character.

And if the tragic character must be noble, the comic character here is from the common people and does not belong to the noble social class, which allows for possessing traits that avoid the proper mean.

And if virtue always lies between two vices—courage lies between recklessness and cowardice, generosity between stinginess and extravagance, and so forth—then the characteristics of the comic character always fall on the two edges of virtue; you find the comic character either reckless or cowardly, whereas you find the tragic character courageous, and so on.

In addition to the two types of drama mentioned here—tragedy and comedy—the Greeks knew a third type of dramatic writing, which we alluded to earlier: the **satyr play**. It resembles the tragicomic in its composition. It was performed by worshippers of Zeus, wearing the clothing symbolizing him: goatskins. No examples of this dramatic genre have reached us except a single example attributed by historians to the Greek poet Euripides, especially since it was customary for the tragic poet to present three tragedies and one satyr work in each annual competition.

Perhaps what arouses admiration when passing through Greek drama is the intellectual value of the dramatic texts, whether tragic or comic. It is striking that these texts of such high value were presented under a state that believed in the role of theatre in elevating the taste and thought of its citizens. For this reason, spectators from all spectrums of society were equal, with the slave made equal to the master, and the ruler to the ruled.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle reveals that the aim of drama is to entertain and to instruct, and that the recipient learns from it experiences they previously did not know through alternative human experiences. Moreover, the function that drama performs is catharsis; either the recipient is purged of the emotions of pity and fear by arousing them within themselves, as in tragedy, or they are purged of the emotion of anger by arousing the emotion of laughter within themselves, as in comedy.

In the third treatise of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle founds this function of drama on the basis that emotions are of two types: the first is beneficial, and the second is harmful. He reveals that the harmful emotions are fear, pity, and anger, and that they are responsible for the inability of a person influenced by them to judge things with sound value judgment; the lower the level of their harmful emotion, the higher the level of their value judgment and their ability to judge things.

And if the imitation in tragedy is of a single, serious, and dangerous action, then the imitation in comedy is likewise of a single action, but one characterized by levity rather than seriousness, and performed by a character lower than the general level of the audience of recipients. “Lower” here means lower in terms of social and moral class. This gives the recipient a feeling of superiority, condescension, and ridicule towards it.

The nature of the artistic imitation in both types of drama (tragic and comic) reveals that the Greek tragic and comic poet, in his artistic imitation, concerned himself only with a single dramatic action. This applies to almost all the plays that have reached us.

If we look closely at the number of acted episodes in the Greek tragedies and comedies that have reached us, we will notice—after removing the choral hymns—that any Greek play consists of five acted episodes. This fact appears clearly in the comedies of Menander, which

completely eliminated the choral hymns and formulated the five acts more clearly in a sequential manner.

For this reason, we are not surprised by that Latin feeling of the sublime nature of Greek taste; especially after the Romans seized the Greek lands and countries and enslaved those Greeks who fell into their hands, they were aware of the Greeks' cultural role, which is what led the elite of Roman society to raise their sons with Greek tutors. For a Roman to be among the distinguished, he had to be knowledgeable of the Greek language, arts, and literature.

When the Romans invaded the territories adjacent to them and expanded their dominion, it was at the expense of the Greek Empire, which had weakened and whose rulers had become less capable of defending it. Within a not very long time, the Greek territories became Roman possessions, and the growing Roman Empire expanded eastward and westward until it gained supremacy. The Roman Empire became the richest kingdom on earth and the mightiest in arms and equipment.

Once the conditions of the Roman Empire stabilized, the Romans felt an inclination to imitate the Greeks in the field of arts and literature. However, the Roman nature stood between the entry of tragedy into the heart of Roman theatrical culture; the predominant nature of the Roman citizen as a man of war—coming from one battle to go to another—made him live tragedies in the killing and displacement of the peoples he fought. For this reason, it was logical that tragedy would not find acceptance among the Roman citizen, and it sufficed as a literary piece that could be enjoyed when heard in a gathering or a literary salon.

Despite the quality of the tragedies written by the Latin poet Seneca (4 BC – 65 AD), who is considered one of the most skillful writers of Latin tragedy—a philosopher and politician who drew inspiration for his tragic works from Greek tragedy, such as *Hercules*, *The Phoenician Women*, *Phaedra*, *Medea*, *Agamemnon*, and *Oedipus*—the importance of these tragedies lies in their being the only Latin tragedies to have reached us, and they had a clear impact on the development of the art of drama, especially with the English poet William Shakespeare.

Seneca's tragedies are distinguished from their Latin predecessors, which have not reached us, in that Seneca's tragedies represent a genuine dramatic treatment, even though

they rely on a Greek subject, whereas their predecessors were merely Latin translations of Greek tragedies.

Seneca did not write his tragedies to be performed on stage, due to the Roman citizen's nature which we have indicated, but rather he wrote them solely for reading to the elite of nobles and senior Roman state officials. They depended on the power of their linguistic depiction for their effect on listeners. For this reason, we are not surprised by the existence of some tragic scenes that are impossible to embody on the acting stage. Also, a single actor might perform more than one role in a rhetorical, non-dramatic manner.

Seneca's theatrical world is characterized by instilling an atmosphere of horror in his scenes; he is considered the first writer to deliberately use this terrifying depiction in his theatre, something that Elizabethan playwrights, especially Shakespeare, borrowed from him.

If we look beyond the early beginnings of Latin comedy—especially in its phases of translation and adaptation—we will find that there were two comic poets who represented Latin comedy excellently: Plautus and Terence Afer.

The Greek comic writer Menander held immense importance because his theatre possessed features that were predominant in serving as the wellspring from which Roman poets drew: the subjects were more social, comic, and logical; the fast, telegraphic dialogue provoking laughter; the human archetypes more conducive to laughter; in addition to the disappearance of the chorus and its hymns, making the drama more lively.

Add to the above that Menander's comedies were chronologically closer to the Roman poets, and for this reason, his influence appeared clearly on Roman comedy in terms of the nature of subjects and technique—especially since Menander abandoned those issues that Aristophanes used to raise in his comedies against the ruler, philosophers, or writers; instead, the comedies sought to entertain and amuse the audience. This same tendency, along with the means that assist it, was transmitted to the Roman comedy written by Roman poets.

Plautus (254 BC – 184 BC) is considered the first Greek playwright to derive his subjects from Menander for the benefit of the Roman audience, owing to his ability for lively, joyful comic writing. Specialized studies agree that 21 complete comedies from him have reached us, namely:

- *Amphitryon*,
- *The Asses*,
- *The Pot of Gold*,
- *The Two Bacchises*,
- *The Captives*,
- *Casina*,
- *The Casket*,
- *Curculio*,
- *Epidicus*,
- *The Menaechmus Twins*,
- *The Merchant*,
- *The Swaggering Soldier*,
- *The Haunted House*,
- *The Persian*,
- *The Little Carthaginian*,
- *Pseudolus*,
- *The Rope*,
- *Stichus*,
- *Trinummus*,
- *The Churl (or Truculentus)*,
- *The Basket*.

Plautus is distinguished by his mastery of the Latin language and its popular shades of meaning.

Plautus benefited from his ability to understand the secrets of comedy in the Greek poet Menander and was able to transfer these skills in comic writing to the Latin language. Perhaps his fondness for twins and the confusion between them, for offspring that appear illegitimate and then it is discovered that the son is indeed the offspring of the play's hero, along with the abundance of sexual relations outside the framework of marriage that lead to this confusion

and the resulting paradoxical comic situations, in addition to the role of the clever servant who plays a cunning part in moving events, pushing them forward, and increasing their comic effect.

And if tragedy did not find acceptance on the acting stage, then comedy found widespread popular acceptance, due to its function of amusement and entertainment.

It is important to note here the role of Latin comedy in the development of comedy, especially in the seventeenth century in France, where Molière benefited from it.

It is also worth noting that Plautus was more concerned with the comedy of the individual scene than with its harmony with the scenes preceding and following it, in addition to his interest in human archetypes closer to the Roman spectator and his taste.

Plautus focused on stock characters, whom the audience easily recognizes the moment they appear on the acting stage, and who trigger a swift laughing response from the audience.

Among the Roman poets who contributed to the field of Latin comic writing was the Roman poet Terence Afer (195 BC – 159 BC). He was an African slave brought to Rome, and his master freed him simply out of admiration for his poetic skills. He was renowned for the eloquence of his style and his preservation of the Latin language from the influence of local dialects. As a comic playwright, he did not seek the popularity of the Roman common people but sought to win the respect of the elite of Roman intellectuals and literati. He gained their respect and became a distinguished poet and a man of theatre known for the refinement of his output. He adapted his comic works from Greek originals, after stripping them of their popular character and giving the servants and slaves Greek names.

Six of his comic texts have reached us:

- *Andria* (The Girl from Andros),
- *The Mother-in-Law*,
- *The Self-Tormentor*,
- *The Eunuch*,
- *Phormio*,
- *The Brothers*.

The Roman poets set an ingenious example in how to benefit from the cultural heritage of others and integrate it into the heart of their own culture. They had no heritage in the field of dramatic art, despite their superiority in many other fields such as accounting, lawmaking, and military affairs. In a short time, the Roman poets were able to make comedy express Roman society, expose human flaws, and make them material for mockery and laughter to rid society of them, on two levels: popular reception and specialized reception targeting the educated elite in particular.

And if Greek drama relies—essentially—on the imitation of a single action, serious and dangerous in tragedy and humorous in comedy, the Romans in their dramas relied on imitating Greek dramatic works, particularly tragedy and comedy; Seneca imitated Greek tragedies, while Plautus and Terence imitated their comedies.

And if Greek tragedy did not show scenes of violence on the acting stage, Roman tragedy under Seneca was replete with scenes of murder and violence. And if Greek tragedy had found popularity among the general public on the stage, Roman tragedy was denied widespread reception, and lovers of this art contented themselves with its recitation in literary salons with limited attendance.

In general, it can be said that ancient classical drama among the Greeks and Romans aimed to express the issues of contemporary humanity. And if Greek drama diversified into tragedy, comedy, and satyr play, Roman drama did not concern itself with the satyr play and focused only on the other two types of drama (tragedy and comedy). The form of dramatic creation at the end of the Greek era reached the point of neglecting the role of the chorus and being content with the five acted episodes, and this extended to the Romans, such that the tragic and comic play came to consist of five acts.

Ancient classical drama expressed the nature of its recipients from the Greek and Roman peoples. While we did not find scenes of murder and battles on the Greek stage in tragedy, we found them clearly in their Roman counterpart under Seneca, and it even became easy to find ghosts—something that extended, as we shall see later, clearly into Shakespeare’s tragedies in the sixteenth century AD in England.

It is noted, from the foregoing, that drama was written in poetic language in both its tragic and comic types, and this tradition continued until after the mid-eighteenth century AD, out of a conviction that the art of the word could not be art without being poetry—a fact manifested in all the arts known as the arts of speech.

Here, the ancient classical age of the Greeks and Romans announces its end, revealing the continuation of drama in its two types, tragic and comic, in development, reaching what we indicated with Seneca, Plautus, and Terence Afer, before the winds of general cultural change blew with the spread of Christianity in Eastern and Western Europe, and the beginning of a long dark age known historically as the Middle Ages, which viewed the cultural heritage of the Greeks and Romans as pagan heritage to be shunned and not dealt with.

Emerging from the Slumber of the Middle Ages

After what resembled dense darkness that enveloped all of Europe for entire centuries due to the Church's control over the public and private life of European societies, Italy was the vanguard of the European countries visited by the sun of the general Renaissance that encompassed everything. This age, from the tenth century AD onward, was marked by a spirit of adventure that reflected on all human activities: scientific, literary, and artistic.

It is clear that the Italian Renaissance took a profound interest in the discovery of Aristotle's book known as the *Poetics*, its translation, and its publication for the first time. The matter did not stop there; Italian critics proceeded to present their interpretations concerning Aristotle's book, which led to their being known as the "Commentators on Aristotle."

During this period, the Italians expressed their admiration for Roman drama; they published the tragedies of Seneca, and the princes who were patrons of the arts took an interest in building magnificent theatres in the Italian style—a style that spread throughout the world to this day and is known as the proscenium theatre.

The Italians began to encourage performances of Greek and Roman theatre on their stages, and the audience gradually grew until theatrical life returned as it had been before the

Middle Ages. However, the critics' interpretations of Aristotle's *Poetics* and their legislations —that drama must be either tragedy or comedy, and must adhere to the three unities: meaning it should have a single subject, its events should revolve within the confines of a single city, and the dramatic time should not exceed twenty-four hours—these critical writings acted as a pickaxe that demolished the free creative values among Italian playwrights, causing theatrical activity to suffer from stagnation and repetition. This naturally resulted in a decline in audience attendance at theatres, followed by the intervention of some with creative critical writings, emphasizing that the Greek play was never presented in isolation from music and choral singing. This led to an interest in sung interludes of pastoral poetry embodying amorous subjects, which attracted the audience anew.

This new color resulted in an interest in presenting musical plays, whether tragedies or comedies, mostly sung with orchestral accompaniment, until the end of the fifteenth century announced the birth of a complete new dramatic art: the art of opera. This helped renew the general public's interest in theatre, especially since this theatrical form was entirely free from the critical dictums that exerted their rigidity on traditional theatre.

If we move to Spain, we find that the first important writer is Lope de Vega (1562 – 1635 AD), a writer known for his prolific output, of which only five hundred plays remain, the most important being *The Sheep Well*, *The Gardener's Dog*, *The Silent Lover*, and *Fool in School*. Lope de Vega's plays belong to the comedy genre and are known as "cape and sword plays." His plays reveal that he paid no heed to pre-existing rules, as he wrote about peasants and common folk.

Alongside Lope de Vega, there is another Spanish writer no less important: Calderón de la Barca, whose plays number 200, most of which belong to religious and comic subjects.

The third important Spanish playwright is Tirso de Molina (1571 – 1648 AD), another comic poet who followed the path of Lope de Vega in his writings.

It is worth noting that Spanish drama concerned itself with the lives of ordinary members of society and their issues, and presented the image of the nobleman in a comic light.

It is important to say that the quantitative division of Spanish plays during the sixteenth century varied between three, four, and five acts. Similarly, the sources upon which Spanish

dramatic poets drew varied among history, religion, life, and the chivalric deeds of heroes, etc. In addition, Spanish dramatic poets were greatly concerned with comedy throughout this age, as comedy found popularity and attraction among the Spanish audience of that period.

The primary function of Spanish drama, like its predecessors, remained the function of entertaining spectators and instructing them, due to the sources of joy, human experiences, and the prevalence of noble values contained in these comedies.

Drama in the Elizabethan Age

Although the golden age of Spanish theatre is considered contemporaneous with the Elizabethan English theatre, it nonetheless appears less forceful, less influential, and less resilient before history in terms of the interest of the world's theatrical venues in presenting its dramatic heritage.

Elizabethan drama represents an important qualitative leap in the line of Western drama's development, on the levels of dramatic expression and the invention of new techniques on the one hand, and on the other hand, in transcending what were known in the ancient classical age as the rules of dramatic writing—rules that erroneously became widespread due to the Aristotelian commentators on the *Poetics* and the subsequent stagnation in dramatic writing during the Italian Renaissance.

The Elizabethan age is attributed to the period when Queen Elizabeth I ruled England between 1558 and 1603, a period during which England witnessed tremendous development on all military, economic, and artistic levels.

The age of Queen Elizabeth I witnessed a clear surge in the field of dramatic creativity at the hands of those known as the "University Wits," including the two brilliant poets Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe, in addition to a third writer considered one of the most skillful writers of Western drama: the poet William Shakespeare.

The English poet Thomas Kyd (1558 – 1591 AD) represents one of the important pillars upon which Elizabethan drama was built, and the most influential on the entire age due to the

ingenious dramatic expressive capabilities he bequeathed in his dramas, from which the poets of his age benefited, especially his play *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Among the University Wits who also enriched Elizabethan drama, despite the shortness of his life, was the poet Christopher Marlowe (1564 – 1593 AD), who invented the use of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) in dramatic writing, and who is considered the real teacher who most influenced Shakespeare.

He left an important collection of plays:

- *Tamburlaine* Parts 1 & 2 (1590),
- *Doctor Faustus* (1604),
- *Edward II* (1593),
- *The Jew of Malta* (1633),
- *The Massacre at Paris* (1594),
- *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1594),

in addition to his contributions to the epic, the poem, and translation.

William Shakespeare is the dramatic poet whose works are most translated into living languages and the one most fortunate in having his dramatic works presented on the acting stage from the sixteenth century until now.

Shakespeare spent the beginning of his life in his birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon, and in the British capital, London. He left behind thirty-nine plays between tragedy and comedy, in addition to a considerable number of poetic sonnets and other narrative poems.

Shakespeare's productive life can be divided into several phases as follows:

The First Phase:

This is the phase of his early beginnings in dramatic composition. The construction of his plays in this phase is characterized by weakness compared to those of his contemporaries. His poetic language is marked by affectation and rhetoric. The plays of this phase were concerned

with English history, such as his trilogy: *King Henry VI* (1590-1592) and *King Richard III* (1593).

Shakespeare's style in this phase resembles the style of medieval theatre and that of the Roman poet Seneca. This appears in the bloody scenes of violence and through the bombastic rhetorical language, especially in his play *Titus Andronicus* (1594), where he depicted revenge and murder on stage, blending history, politics, and national sentiment with historical characters imbued with a comic spirit.

He also wrote during this phase his play *The Comedy of Errors* (1592), following the model of traditional Roman comedy in terms of the confusion of characters' identities, the resemblance of twin characters, and the farcical turmoil.

And his play *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593), where he focused on the characters' behavior and emotions to weave comic situations. There is also the play *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1594), which presents romantic love, and the play *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594), where he embodied the negative transformations in the characters of lovers in a state of love, as childish behavior cloaks their personalities.

The Second Phase:

This phase was one of the most important phases of Shakespeare's dramas. He wrote the history plays: *King Richard II* (1595), *King John* (1596), and in two parts his play *King Henry IV* (1597), and the play *King Henry V* (1598). In addition, during this phase he wrote his most joyful and distinctive comic texts, such as: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), *Twelfth Night* (1595), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *As You Like It* (1599), *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), *Julius Caesar* (1599), and *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), where we notice the development in his style.

The Third Phase:

This phase in Shakespeare's life represents artistic maturity. Here he wrote his greatest tragic texts, which display depth of vision and brilliance of dramatic craftsmanship, as he merged human emotions, affecting situations, and human thought. During this phase, he wrote the tragedy *Hamlet* (1601), which is considered his most famous play ever; he wrote the

tragedy *Othello* (1604); the tragedy *King Lear* (1605); his play *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606); and the tragedy *Macbeth* (1606).

Shakespeare also wrote dark comedies about characters lacking greatness and strength in controlling their passions, such as *Troilus and Cressida* (1602), and he wrote his play *Coriolanus* (1608), *Timon of Athens*, and *All's Well That Ends Well* (1602).

The Fourth Phase:

In this phase, Shakespeare wrote his most important romantic texts, which some critics consider his most mature works overall in terms of their vision of life. He wrote *Pericles* (1608), *Cymbeline* (1610), and *The Winter's Tale* (1610). The play *The Tempest*, which Shakespeare wrote in 1611, is considered the best of what he wrote in this phase.

It is worth mentioning that two types of dramatic sources prevailed in the Elizabethan age: first, the revenge tragedy taken from Seneca's theatre; and second, the comedies of Plautus and Terence Afer. This age was renowned for translation from Latin and Italian.

A study of Shakespeare's dramas reveals Shakespeare's immense benefit from Roman drama in his early works, especially the embodiment of murder scenes on stage and the appearance of ghosts and the like.

Add to this Shakespeare's benefit from the style of blank verse invented by Christopher Marlowe in dramatic writing, due to its resemblance to the rhythm of dialogue in daily life. Shakespeare also added comic relief scenes to his tragedies, which thus appeared as a mixture of tragedy and comedy, giving an impression more akin to reality, since in life tragic and comic elements intermix. It is noticeable that Shakespeare did not adhere to the three unities that the Aristotelian commentators of the Italian Renaissance period had frequently discussed; the double plot (complex in subject) appeared in his plays, his plays exceeded a dramatic time equaling a single solar cycle, nor did Shakespeare commit to making the play's events revolve within the confines of a single city or country.

It is observed that Elizabethan drama in sixteenth-century England diversified between tragic works and comic works.

Perhaps William Shakespeare's fondness for the Senecan tragic composition—in reference to the tragedies of Seneca, with their scenes of murder and violence, their division into five acts, their composition in dignified poetry, and the presence of ghosts, etc.—is clear, yet the credit of the theatre of Plautus and Terence Afer remains likewise an evident tributary to comic writing in the Elizabethan age. Add to this the fertile imagination of medieval comedy theatre.

This means that Elizabethan drama did not look to Greek drama in its imitation, but rather concerned itself—clearly—with the forms of Roman drama that reached them. Especially since the three writers who represent the most important Elizabethan drama writers knew the Latin language, on the one hand, and that era in England was an era in which translation from Latin and Italian flourished, as we previously presented.

Neoclassicism in France

The seventeenth century in France was known as the age of French Classicism, or the golden age of drama in France. Its serious stride began with the play *Le Cid* (1637 AD), written by the great poet Pierre Corneille (1606 – 1684 AD). This play provoked the ire of some poets and critics, while others admired it, and a famous literary battle ensued, known as the "Quarrel of *Le Cid*." An official complaint was filed with Cardinal Richelieu, the head of the French Academy, alleging that the poet Pierre Corneille had abandoned the known traditions of writing tragedy in his play *Le Cid*.

Richelieu formed a committee composed of the senior poets and critics of the French Academy to study the matter, and it concluded that Corneille had violated the traditions of writing tragedy, as he had mixed the elements of tragedy, which represent the general form of the play, with a comic ending for the play. The French Academy proceeded to publish the necessary writing rules for classical drama, to which Corneille and his peers subsequently adhered.

Pierre Corneille wrote several plays, including:

- *Mélite* (1631),
- *Le Cid* (1637),
- *Horace* (1640),
- *Oedipus* (1659).

The French Academy recognized Corneille's value and admitted him several years later to its literary committee in 1647 AD. Corneille's tragedies are characterized by a display of the hero's constant conflict between the emotions of love and duty, where duty always triumphs.

The second tragic poet of this era in France is the dramatic poet Jean Racine (1639 – 1699 AD), who contributed by writing tragedies of high value that adhere to classical traditions. His works include:

- *Alexander the Great* (1665),
- *Andromaque* (1667),
- *The Litigants* (comedy, 1668),
- *Bérénice* (1670),
- *Phèdre* (1677).

Racine is considered the tragic poet who followed the path of Corneille's tragedies, although his subjects were not like Corneille's; instead, Racine relied on the theme of impossible love, where the first party loves the second, while the second party loves a third. None of his characters find their love reciprocated in kind.

If Aristophanes is the most important comic writer in ancient Greece, then the French poet Molière (1622 – 1673) is considered the most important comic poet of the Renaissance, due to his ability to select the subjects of his comedies and his creative capacity to write comedies of high value in terms of their thought and technique.

In his comedies, Molière criticized all social conditions and the traits of characters marked by eccentricity and deviance, such as the old man who acts young in *The School for Wives* (1662), the religious hypocrite in *Tartuffe* (1664), the domineering society ladies and pretenders to culture in *The Affected Ladies* (1659), and many others.

Molière's attention to diversifying the means of provoking laughter, his ability to choose issues that were both highly important and satirical at the same time, and his capacity to depict human types capable of making the audience of spectators laugh—this is what elevated Molière to that high status he enjoyed throughout the entire European Renaissance, not limited to his uniqueness in France alone.

It is worth noting that all the dramatic poets of the French Renaissance, whether tragic or comic poets, adhered to the set of rules established by the members of the French Academy, which are:

- The classical play is based on the imitation of Greek and Roman drama.
- The play, whether tragedy or comedy, is divided in its external form into five acts.
- The play adheres to the separation of genres; i.e., it is either a tragic play or a comic one.
- The play adheres to the three unities: unity of action, so that the play's subject is a single subject with no second; unity of time, meaning the events of the play revolve within a period of a single solar cycle or one day; and they added unity of place, meaning the events occur within the confines of a single city, not leaving it for another.
- The events of the tragic play are carried out by people of the noble class, both socially and morally.
- The play, tragedy and comedy, is composed in poetic form, and in dignified poetry for tragedy, befitting its noble characters who speak it.
- The play consists—in its external form—of five acts.
- Observance of the principle of decorum: not showing scenes of violence and murder on the stage.

Denis Diderot and the Birth of a New Dramatic Genre

Consider the French writer Denis Diderot (1713 – 1784). A man as concerned with scientific matters, especially in establishing the French *Encyclopédie* and translating some important scientific books of the time, as he was with dramatic writing, we also find him interested in studying the art of the actor in an important essay published after his death

entitled *The Paradox of the Actor*. His importance also goes back to his clear influence on Lessing and on drama following him in general.

Diderot is considered one of the defenders of bourgeois drama, with which the middle-class masses in the eighteenth century were enamoured, with its mixture of emotions and virtues.

If we ponder the titles of his two plays *The Natural Son* and *The Father of the Family*, we find they contain the mixture of virtue and human emotion, as in his play *Is He Good or Wicked?*

Diderot's works were translated into several living languages, including German, English, and Italian. His theoretical essays represent his views on dramatic writing.

The value of Denis Diderot as a dramatic writer appears in that he created a new dramatic genre which he named, for the first time, *drame* (drama)—a genre that does not rely on the known elements of tragedy or the familiar elements of comedy, but rather is an imitation of a serious event by nature, performed by ordinary people, not from the noble class.

Romanticism Shatters Classical Rules

Classical plays continued in France, both by the three poets we previously introduced when discussing French Classicism and those who followed them who were less famous.

During the eighteenth century, the numbers of the bourgeois class began to increase, ultimately forming a force that helped bring about the French Revolution, until in one of the plays of that period a line appeared on the tongue of a servant speaking mockingly to his master: "What have you done to deserve all these privileges? You have done nothing except favor the world with your birth." All these ideas, born from the circumstances of the bourgeois class's growth, culminated in the French Revolution, which bolstered the national spirit at the expense of the general human spirit.

This led to the citizen's pride in nationalism and individualism, and disbelief in previous political systems. The principle of personal freedom, as well as general freedom, was established.

Among the causes that paved the way for the emergence of Romanticism was the migration of Protestants to Germany in large numbers, until the number of French Protestants in Germany reached forty thousand, which cultivated another type of taste different from the French taste.

Add to this a historical factor related to the death of the supreme French model, Napoleon, alone on a remote island, which shook the feelings of the French and weakened their conviction in the rational power that had represented the French mentality at the time of Napoleon.

The philosophical current of feeling and sensibility had paved the way, and this appeared in the literature of Rousseau. Philosophical investigations spread, affirming that the source of beauty lies in taste, and that taste is relative and subjective, not general or objective. These new philosophical investigations emphasized that it is subject to feelings and emotions.

The dramatic poet Shakespeare remained unknown for a full century after his death, until Voltaire published his *Philosophical Letters*, which contained the merits of Shakespeare, while at the same time criticizing him for his non-adherence to classical rules. For he shows scenes of violence and murder on stage, which offends the feelings of an audience raised on Classicism. Voltaire is considered the one who rediscovered Shakespeare and introduced the world to him. When his two plays *Othello* and *Hamlet*, which Voltaire translated into French, were performed on the stage of the Comédie-Française, the French audience was impressed, especially Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885), who rose up when he saw one of the two plays and said: "This is the theatre I want." By this, he meant a theatre that mimics reality, in which tragic and comic elements mix as in life, and in which we see battles as we see them in life—an unaffected theatre, a theatre that is not restricted by those archaic classical fetters that no longer suit the age.

Victor Hugo presented his first play, *Cromwell*, but it did not succeed when performed on stage. He published it in 1819, and included within the published play a long study on

Romanticism, later known as the “Preface to Cromwell” or the Manifesto of Romanticism.

In 1830, Hugo presented his play *Hernani*, which achieved great success, and its author’s fame spread. Afterward, Hugo published the rest of his dramatic and novelistic works, which reflected the taste and thought of the age and most truthfully expressed its issues.

Credit goes to Romanticism for shaking the pillars of classical rules. Hugo and those influenced by him from his generation engaged in writing dramas that did not adhere to the classical character and its rules. They did not commit to the three unities but invented what is known as the “unity of the total effect.” The heroes of the play were no longer from the noble class, but from the lowest popular classes, and Romantic drama mixed tragic and comic elements. It used poetic language that mixed local words heard by the citizen in the street, as they had a more effective impact than ornate expressions.

Despite this, Romantic drama adhered to the classical quantitative division, and the play remained in five acts.

In summary, Romantic drama thrust images of the new bourgeois citizen and his issues onto the stage after his influence became predominant in French society. This was also reflected in narrative works, novels, and stories, where the destitute human being became the center of drama, stories, and novels alike.

The Discovery of Modern Sciences and the Renewal of Dramatic Visions

From the second half of the eighteenth century, scientific discoveries began to appear and spread, reflecting on public life and the convictions of the European individual in general.

Among these sciences was sociology, which revealed the role of society in shaping the individual and the responsibility of that society in directing its individuals towards the correct or the wrong path. At that time, humanistic visions that criminalized society—responsible for producing an individual whose behavior is characterized by criminality—became widespread.

Art and literature did not stand helpless before this general feeling; rather, the call to attempt depicting reality objectively played an important role in the emergence of what is known as the Realist school (*Realism*). The term appeared for the first time in 1833 to denote that art whose source is not imaginary, but rather precise observation of reality. The theorist of Realism in French literature, Jules Champfleury, considered it synonymous with truthfulness in art through his articles which he entitled "Realism" in 1857.

Among the writers who rode the wave of Realism were Balzac, Stendhal, and Alexandre Dumas fils. In the field of drama, we find Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, Maxim Gorky, Gogol, Chekhov, and many others.

Realist drama adopted a set of characteristics: using the language of everyday life and its situations; interpreting characters' actions and motives from social and psychological perspectives; giving the recipient the illusion of the truth of what they see before them on the acting stage.

Several different styles emerged from Realism, bearing the same title of realism, such as: Socialist Realism, Psychological Realism, Neo-Realism, etc. One of the most prominent directors who led the Realist current was the Russian director Stanislavski.

Then genetics was discovered, revealing the hidden behavior of individuals' hereditary genes, and Naturalism (*Naturalism*) appeared in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a natural extension of the Realist current. Its foundations were laid by Émile Zola (1840-1903), who theorized for the naturalist theatre in his two books *Naturalism in the Theatre* and *Our Dramatic Authors*.

Naturalism set off from a scientific starting point influenced by the discoveries of genetics, and the interpretation of human behavior began as the legitimate offspring of the reality it inhabits.

Naturalist drama shuns the use of plot-weaving devices, surprise, and crisis. The stage settings also convey the details of the theatrical scene as they are in nature, like the setting in the play *The Butchers* by the French director André Antoine. Zola also demanded that actors live their dramatic roles as they live them in reality.

Examples of naturalist dramas include: the play *Miss Julie* by the Swedish writer August Strindberg, and the play *The Lower Depths* by the Russian writer Maxim Gorky.

We must not forget that after the emergence of analytical scientific philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which relied on the theories of John Locke and Descartes concerning knowledge, came Immanuel Kant in the late nineteenth century, who shattered their assumption of the objective existence of the external world and affirmed that the human mind reformulates external phenomena and endows them with new meanings within us, thereby establishing a new meaning for human vision and the role of the symbol in realizing the inner truth of the human being.

This was reflected in poetry first in 1885, which saw the rejection of the principle of imitating nature, that the sensory world is nothing but a forest of symbols as Baudelaire saw it, a belief in the unity and autonomy of the artwork, the complex symbolic structure that expresses the spirit of art and its own spiritual truth, the discovery of new feelings and psychological states, that creativity is a conscious process with its own faculties inside the human mind, and the necessity of relying on suggestion rather than direct statement.

Symbolist drama broke free from preserved linguistic clichés; it concerned itself with embodying dreams and fantasies and creating an atmosphere of mystery.

Among the most famous writers of symbolist drama was the Belgian-born writer Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), as in his plays *The Intruder*, *The Blind*, and *Pelléas and Mélisande*. Also as in Strindberg's two plays *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*, in Henrik Ibsen's late works such as *The Master Builder* and *When We Dead Awaken*, and in the plays of Synge.

In 1909, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published a document entitled "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in which this call rebelled against inherited artistic traditions, giving the opportunity for the emergence of many theatrical schools breaking away from it, such as Dada, Surrealism, and the Theatre of the Absurd.

The advocates of these movements focused on the emotional world of the human being, embodied philosophical and spiritual meanings poetically, using symbol and metaphor, leading to the appearance of dramas marked by a complete departure from the objective

environment, whether realistic or imagined, such as the play *Boredom* by its author Angelo Rognoni.

Futurist writers relied on provoking the recipient, confronting them, and calling for nihilistic thought, as in the works of Francesco Cangiullo, such as *Detonation*.

The writers of this current were keen on placing simultaneous parallel events together, the prevalence of music, and breaking inherited traditional theatre rules.

The first use of the term *Surrealism* goes back to the French writer Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), who described a theatrical work with this name. In the same year, he wrote the play *The Breasts of Tiresias* to apply the ideas of this new artistic movement.

The coining of the term Surrealism goes back to the playwright André Breton, who split from the Dada movement after he became acquainted with the ideas of psychoanalytic theory by the Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud, especially since Breton was a medical student at the time. Breton announced the establishment of the Surrealist movement with a manifesto presenting its principles, describing it as "pure psychic automatism." Breton saw that dreams are stronger than anything else, and that one must use the method of free association, unleash thought, and not be bound by rules and old clichés. Hence, he coined the term *automatism*, meaning self-driven movement, directing writers and literati to record their reactions through free, unconscious flow. For this reason, the Surrealists resorted to hypnosis and narcotic pills to liberate themselves from the conscious mind.

The Surrealist movement continued until the end of World War II, despite the paucity of its output. Perhaps this is because—as Martin Esslin sees it—the need for the presence of consciousness, not its absence. The play *The Wheel with a Mirror… A Lovely Evening* and the play *On the Wall*, published by Louis Aragon, are examples of this type of drama. Both Antonin Artaud and Roger Vitrac split from the Surrealist movement to found the Alfred Jarry Theatre and present the play *Upsets in the Stomach* and the play *The Mysteries of Love* in 1927.

While the Surrealists' plays focused on the artist's personal unconscious, Artaud's plays focused on the collective unconscious. Hence, he created what he called the "Theatre of

Cruelty" to emphasize form, movement, and lighting instead of words, and to rely on myth instead of reality.

The **Expressionist** drama current came as a reaction to the German social revolution that stood with the lower classes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite this, the expressionist plays of the Swedish writer August Strindberg are considered to predate its emergence in Germany, having laid the foundations for Expressionist drama in terms of using human archetypes, moving away from traditional plots, and fragmenting the event.

The works of the pre-World War I period expressed subjectivity, liberation from life's burdens, and predictions of the occurrence of catastrophes and the imminence of a battle, as we find in the play *War* by Carl Hauptmann (1912). There is also in this phase a revolutionary character that explains its rejectionist tendencies; among the prominent writers of this period are Oskar Kokoschka in his plays *Murderer, Hope of Women* and *The Burning Bush*, and as in the play *The Dead Day*.

As for the post-World War I phase, the social aspect appeared in Expressionist drama: the conflict between the individual and society, the rejection of war and destruction, as in the play *The Race* (1917) by Fritz von Unruh, and the play *Transfiguration* (1918) by Ernst Toller. In addition to addressing issues of capitalism and the replacement of the human being by the machine, as in the plays of Georg Kaiser, such as the play *Gas*. Nevertheless, Expressionism had no political or social basis; rather, it was a call to express inner human impulses.

Cubism set out from a philosophy of understanding the world surrounding us and expressing it artistically, employing reason to interpret and analyze phenomena for an artistic vision characterized by truthfulness, thus making Cubism the closest of modern artistic currents to science.

The Cubists used theories, sciences, and geometric shapes, as in the works of Pablo Picasso.

The play by the Italian writer Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) known as *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) is considered the ideal dramatic model for the Cubist play, where the spectator confuses truth and illusion.

Theatre of the Absurd

Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) played an important role in modern Western drama. After the premiere of his first play *Ubu Roi* (1896), critics described it as crucial in changing the entire course of Western theatre. In it, Jarry engaged in satirical treatment to show the absurdity of reality and issues that appear important, as well as completely altering the form of the theatrical production; Jarry appears before the audience on the acting stage wearing an exaggerated mask, then speaks of incoherent and unrealistic things.

The set of *Ubu Roi* lacked logic and appeared strange. In his second play *Ubu Cocu* (1898), Jarry presented a satirical parody of the play *Orpheus in Chains*.

Jarry saw the world as a mass of accidental phenomena devoid of logic. Therefore, he invented his philosophy called *Pataphysics*. As Jarry says, it is "the science of imaginary solutions," which leads us to the laws governing all the accidents of existence.

The influence of Symbolism on Jarry is apparent here, a movement he believed in at his beginnings and which reached its peak in his life. Yet, he approaches the writers of the Absurd because he rejected the spiritual world and contented himself with the visible material world.

The Pataphysicians see that each individual phenomenon is governed by its own phenomenon; there are no fixed natural, moral, or aesthetic laws. Pataphysics represented an anarchic phase in modern Western thought, as it sees that every individual has the right to establish their own law, where knowledge and ignorance are equal, and known logic is ignored. It is a philosophy that sees that if there is any truth at all, it cannot be reached except through contradictions, as this philosophy rejects inherited laws and values, while at the same time not calling for dissolution.

During the two World Wars, intellectuals felt their inability to stop the wheel of death and human annihilation. They spoke extensively with the politicians of their countries, but to no avail, in France, England, and elsewhere. Intellectuals and writers felt that language no longer had any use for communication between them and the war leaders.

In addition to this, Pataphysics had a clear influence on Eugène Ionesco (1909-1994), Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), and Arthur Adamov (1908-1970). In Ionesco's play *The Chairs*, the influence of Jarry and Pataphysics on the Theatre of the Absurd is clear, as also in his play *The Bald Soprano*, which the Surrealists celebrated and considered a Surrealist play, while Ionesco himself denied this.

The name Theatre of the Absurd is linked to the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, which premiered in Paris in 1953 and is considered the ideal model of this new dramatic genre.

Drama of the Absurd is characterized by a set of elements, which can be summarized as:

- Non-adherence to rules and breaking theatrical traditions,
- Lack of resemblance to reality,
- Characters represent states and are not characters with histories and fixed traits,
- The dramatic structure is not linked to a logical sequence, and may have a circular structure,
- The philosophy governing the Theatre of the Absurd is nihilism,
- Language is not a means of communication between characters but a means of isolation and seclusion,
- The Absurdist current in drama is considered one of the most important contemporary dramatic currents.

Epic Drama

During the 1920s, an important theatrical current emerged in Germany that received the greatest attention in socialist countries, known as Epic Drama. The credit for its foundation goes to the German theorist and dramatic poet Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). The term "epic theatre" was first used by the German theatre director Erwin Piscator, who introduced epic elements into the dramatic text and theatrical performance, represented in: modifying the form of the performance space, breaking the unity of the dramatic text's cohesion by introducing

narrative elements directed at the audience, and introducing cinematic projections and illuminated slides—elements that Brecht drew from Piscator as an anti-Aristotelian theatre.

Among Brecht's most famous dramas are:

- *He Said Yes / He Said No* (1930),
- *The Exception and the Rule* (1930),
- *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1938),
- *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

The function upon which epic theatre was based was to change reality by enlightening the recipient about the truth of things around them, by asserting that this world is not as God created it, but rather as some people wanted it to be, to serve them. Therefore, it is necessary to revolt against it and change it to achieve justice.

In order for Brecht to reach this result with the recipient, he places them in the position of an observer of events, making them a critic, identifying the real cause of the problem they see. It is hoped that this reality will be changed to achieve justice for all. This is done through the *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect), which Brecht emphasized in his essay "A Short Organum for the Theatre," where he asserts the existence of an incident narrated before the recipient in a way that makes them see it as analogous to a reality that must be changed.

The plot of the play is presented as a discontinuous event; there is no existence of a climax, but rather contradictions from which the recipient deduces the truth of their actual life. On the theatrical level, costume changes occur before the audience, there are no illusionistic scenic elements but rather "thematic" scenic indicators, full stage lighting is used with the lighting instruments visible to the audience. There are placards carried across the stage by an actor indicating the setting; on them might be written: "A Dense Forest," or "A Garden," etc.

Among the elements of alienation also is the use of music that contradicts the theatrical scene; if it is an emotional scene, martial music is used, and vice versa.

Western Drama and Modern Media

Cinematic Drama

In its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, cinema did not know the art of the screenplay. The first to present a screenplay in the sense known today was the French director Georges Méliès (1861-1938) in his film *A Trip to the Moon*. The screenplay further developed at the hands of Edwin S. Porter in 1903 in his film *The Great Train Robbery*, where he divided the film into sequential scenes. The writer and director Richard Spencer was the first professional screenwriter.

The screenplay is a detailed description of the film's events in terms of time, place, and characters with all their dimensions, in addition to the dialogue between the characters, clarifying whether the scene is interior or exterior, morning, noon, or night.

The screenplay is considered the dramatic text of the film, and it has acquired its distinguished writers, those who write only cinematic drama and have no relationship with film directing.

The types of screenplays vary according to the type of cinematic work; there is documentary cinema, feature film, short narrative, short film, etc.

Radio Drama

From the fifth century BC until the late nineteenth century AD, the play knew only the theatre as a medium for presenting dramatic works to an audience of recipients. Then the cinematographic film appeared first, followed by a new medium for presenting drama other than theatre and cinema: the medium of radio.

In 1920, actual American radio broadcasting began under the call sign KDKA, where the U.S. presidential elections were transmitted to the astonishment of all, helping to spread this invention. In Britain, radio transmission began in 1922.

It is noticeable that Western radio has been linked with drama since its beginnings. The first play broadcast by radio station WGY in America was on August 3, 1922: the play *The Wolf* by its author Eugene Walter, where there were musical interludes between the acts of the play.

The British Broadcasting Corporation produced the comedy *A Comedy of Danger* by its author Richard Hughes in 1924. Since that year, French and German radio stations began transmitting plays from the theatre via the airwaves at times, and producing drama specifically for those stations at other times, where dramatic texts were written specifically to be acted by actors before the microphone and broadcast to an audience of listeners.

The volume of radio dramatic production in various European stations, such as the BBC's Third and Fourth Programmes, indicates that it began doubling, reaching hundreds of radio plays annually. This points to the importance of this theatrical genre to the degree that prompted major Western playwrights to write for this medium, which specialized in producing plays written specifically to be acted in the radio studio in front of the microphone, not in the theatre before an audience.

Global playwrights shared with European radio stations in writing radio plays specifically for them. Among these writers were: Bertolt Brecht in Germany, Samuel Beckett in France, Friedrich Dürrenmatt in Switzerland, and Harold Pinter in England. Some of them continued to write plays for radio for a long time, which confirms the suitability of this new medium for producing the play and its ability to deliver the play to the largest possible number of audience, thus transcending the limits of time and place.

The forms of radio drama varied among the play, the evening drama, the series, and special programs that depend on dramatic formulation. Radio drama targets the recipient/listener; therefore, it relies fundamentally on dialogue and the description of place and time using sound effects and dialogue that performs this function indirectly. The radio dramatic text is known as a *script*, and is composed of a series of sequential sound scenes.

Television Drama

In 1884, the German Paul Gottlieb Nipkow was able to invent a flat device that transmitted images for short distances. Vladimir Zworykin presented the first complete television system in 1929. The British Broadcasting Corporation, TBS Company, and the American National Broadcasting Company conducted pioneering experiments that culminated in the start of a real television service through the BBC in 1936, while the first broadcast in the United States was in 1939.

The beginnings of television dramatic presentations were of American Western films in the 1950s, while drama series began in 1960 and were able to attract a large audience.

In the 1960s, the British series *Coronation Street* attracted a huge audience of viewers.

The television dramatic text is also called the *screenplay* or *script*; it is concerned with describing the image, sound, time, place, and characters. Its scenes are sequenced in sequences.

Conclusion

After this long journey through the dramatic achievement in the Western world, with all its forms and formulas that have varied from age to age, until we reached the modern era with its advanced achievements in the field of media—particularly cinema, radio, and television—and the fears of theatre practitioners that accompanied each of these media. Theatre practitioners believed that cinema—when it began to show the beginnings of its dramatic production—made an explicit declaration of the death of the ancient art of theatre forever, because of what the newborn cinema could achieve in reaching the most minute details of the actor's facial expression, voice, and body, or moving with excessive realism from one setting to another. But what happened was that the art of cinema benefitted the art of drama by creating a new means of expression, and it did not stand against the will to live and the continuity of the ancient art of theatre.

Some Western theatre practitioners incorporated the art of cinema into their theatrical productions, especially in what is known as documentary theatre.

Then came radio, which was broadcasting dramatic works to millions of recipients at the same time, with the possibility of recording and rebroadcasting that gave perpetual life to dramatic recordings, transmitted from time to time to the largest number of audiences.

The fears of theatre practitioners resurfaced anew, and they believed that this art would be the one to end the life of theatre, especially since major radio stations set about recording plays in their studios and no longer needed to transmit plays from the theatre hall as they had in their early days.

Despite the spread of radio use in the world, the increase in the number of radio stations, the expansion of broadcasting hours, and the huge investment allocated annually for the production of radio drama, the theatre remained resilient, possessing a splendor, freshness, and vitality unmatched by any other medium.

Then came the television set, which resembles the art of cinema in its images and its ability to penetrate every small object to magnify it before the recipient, and resembles the radio in that it is a device owned by the recipient in their home, through which they can watch the most powerful film dramas, series, and evening dramas. So theatre practitioners imagined that the art of television was the art that came to entirely eliminate the art of theatre—especially since it presents recorded theatrical performances that are rebroadcast from time to time to an immense, uncountable audience.

But the theatre proved its merit and strength and was able to stand firm against all these media, due to a fundamental characteristic unique to it among all media: the live presence between the actor and the spectator. The state of live reception is a feature that all the artistic media have been unable to compensate for.

And drama as an art was able to shape itself, change its color, and alter its presentation mechanisms until it came to appear natural in the media of cinema, radio, and television, just as it is natural in the field of theatre.

All forms of expression and media present drama as an imitation of a unique human action —an action that does not repeat in a lifetime, but occurs only once. It is the exceptional action, in which the character is placed in order to choose, to be tested, and to discover their energy and ability to live. This action is always realized through the novelty of presence or absence: the presence of something, an idea, or a person, or the absence of something, an idea, or a person. At this presence or absence, the character is placed in a new situation, compelled to choose, and by this choice their fate is determined—either happiness or misery.

What gives this action its value is that it is performed by a human being like us, which drives us to identify with them in their choices—in the case of the tragic dramatic work—and to sympathize with them, or to feel superiority and condescension over them in comic behavior, where the character here appears lower in status than us, not only socially but also morally, which is what makes us feel this superiority over them.

The value of drama as a written and embodied work before us enables us to learn from everything we see, and moreover, to increase our human experience beyond our own, through watching a human being like us in a situation of choice, and how their character is what ultimately determines their fate, whether it be a praiseworthy character that accords with the general character of the recipient's society, or different from it.

In addition to what we learn from the choices of the dramatic character, we also feel enjoyment in relation to the knowledge we have received, and because we are not this character who suffers before us—it is merely an artistic work we are only watching—or because of the happiness and laughter we feel from everything we see before us in the comic dramatic work.

For this reason, the word *drama* means everything written to be presented for acting in theatre, cinema, radio, and television. The condition of acting here is that the actor presents a character other than their own within the context of what we have described as action.

That is, the word *drama* is applied to every creative authorial activity intended to be performed by an actor in any medium, whether theatre, cinema, radio, or television.

All acted works presented in any media or theatre take on the character of dramatic works. In addition, the word drama—as we have seen—has been applied across the ages to both

tragic and comic works, and indeed it was also applied to the plays of the French writer Diderot to express the serious play (*drame*).

In modern times, the general meaning of *drama* has been extended to what Diderot applied it to, so that it now also refers to dramatic works that are neither tragic nor comic, but are characterized solely by seriousness.

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About the Author

Essam El-Din Abu El-Ela (born January 3, 1962) is an Egyptian writer, critic, drama researcher, and academic professor. His full name is Essam El-Din Hassan Abu El-Ela Hussein.

Born in Old Cairo, Cairo, in January 1962, he obtained his Bachelor's degree from the Higher Institute of Theatrical Arts in 1987 with a grade of "Very Good" (ranking first in his class). He earned a postgraduate diploma from the same institute at the Academy of Arts in Cairo in 1990. He then received his Master's degree in Drama and Theatrical Criticism in 2000 with a grade of "Excellent". In 2005, he was awarded his Doctorate (PhD) in Drama and Theatrical Criticism from the Academy of Arts in Cairo with First Class Honors.

He has authored more than ninety short studies, all published in specialized and semi-specialized periodicals in Cairo, most notably: *Theatre Magazine* (مجلة المسرح), *Cairo Magazine* (مجلة القاهرة), *Teatro Magazine* (مجلة تياترو), and the *Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre Bulletin* (نشرة مهرجان القاهرة الدولي للمسرح التجريبي). For many years, he participated in editing the bulletin and selecting performances for the festivals of the Egyptian Association for Theatre Amateurs. He also co-edited the bulletin of the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre from 1991 until he stepped down in 1995.

He participated in the first scientific conference of the First Arab Theatre Festival, organized by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture in Cairo, with a research paper titled *Towards a Popular Theatre* (نحو مسرح شعبي). He participated in the activities of the Menofia University Festival commemorating the great poet Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi with a research paper titled *The Romanticism of Young Mahran* (رومانتيكية الفتى مهران). For many years, he participated in seminar, screening, and judging panels at the Theatre Directorate of the General Authority for Cultural Palaces, School Theatre, Youth and Sports Theatre, and University Theatre.

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Short and Medium Studies

He has published dozens of short and medium-length studies since 1988 in journals including: *Cairo* (القاهرة), *Theatre* (المسرح), *Folk Arts* (الفنون الشعبية), *New Culture* (الثقافة الجديدة), *Theatre Horizons* (آفاق المسرح), *Teatro* (تياترو), and *Our Theatre* (مسرحنا).

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Academic and Professional Career

- **Demonstrator**, Department of Drama and Criticism, Higher Institute of Theatrical Arts (appointed July 27, 1989).
- **Assistant Lecturer**, Department of Drama and Theatrical Criticism (appointed 1998).
- **Lecturer**, Department of Drama and Theatrical Criticism (appointed 2005).
- **Associate Professor**, Department of Drama and Theatrical Criticism (appointed 2010).
- **Head of the Department of Drama and Theatrical Criticism** (from 2010 until he resigned from the chairmanship in November 2017).
- **Professor**, Department of Drama and Theatrical Criticism (appointed May 2020).
- **Member of the Permanent Promotions Committee** in the fields of Drama and Theatrical Criticism at the Academy of Arts.
- **Head of the Department of Drama and Theatrical Criticism** (from July 2020 until he resigned from the chairmanship in February 2021).

He has supervised and examined numerous Master's and Doctoral (PhD) theses at the Academy of Arts, Alexandria University, Menofia University, Ain Shams University, Zagazig University, Benha University, and Mansoura University.

In addition to teaching in the three departments at the Higher Institute of Theatrical Arts at the Academy of Arts in Cairo and the Academy of Arts unit in Alexandria, he taught at the Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University for several years, and the Department of Drama and Theatrical Criticism at the Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University for several years. He has also been teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the Higher Institute of Folk Arts for many years, and taught at the Higher Institute of Child Arts.

He worked on play reading panels at the Theatre Directorate of the General Authority for Cultural Palaces for many years, as well as radio drama reading panels at the Radio Sector in Maspero for several years before stepping down. He currently serves on the play reading committee at the Artistic House of Theatre under the Egyptian Ministry of Culture.